GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
RAILWAYS
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:383
ANSWERED ON:29.03.2017
Sale of Food Items at Stations
Chavan Shri Ashok Shankarrao;Gaikwad Dr. Sunil Baliram

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware of steep rise in the cost of food items sold at the railway stations and in the trains after privatisation;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the private caterers are also unable to supply hot food during journey as they generally pick up food packets from earmarked stations as they lack kitchen and food warming facilities and if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the corrective measures taken/being taken by the Government in this regard so as to make the system more customer friendly?

Answer

MINISTER OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI SURESH PRABHAKAR PRABHU)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

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STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF STARRED QUESTION NO. 383 BY SHRI ASHOK SHANKARRAO CHAVAN AND DR. SUNIL BALIRAM GAIKWAD TO BE ANSWERED IN LOK SABHA ON 29.03.2017 REGARDING SALE OF FOOD ITEMS AT STATIONS

(a) & (b): No, Madam. Food sold at stations and in trains over Indian Railways is affordable for common passengers. The Ministry of Railways undertakes revision of cost of food items sold on trains and at Railway Stations from time to time. The prices of various food items are fixed through a system of authorised committee constituted by the Ministry of Railways and are revised periodically. The menu and the tariff has been last revised in 2012 in case of standard menu items (tea/coffee/Janata Meal etc.) and 2013 in case of menu items for premium trains viz Rajdhani/Shatabdi/Duronto Express.

For the next revision a committee has been constituted under the provision of new Catering Policy 2017 launched on 27th February, 2017. This Committee has been mandated to lay down the modalities for the revision of tariff so as to ensure affordability of food besides giving passengers value for money. As per the policy menu and tariff of food items will be fixed as follows:

(i) For controlled segment items/standard menu/Janta Meals on units handed over to Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), the menu to be decided by IRCTC in consultation with Zonal Railways within the fixed tariff approved by Railway Board.

(ii) Menu of controlled segment items including regional cuisine on minor static catering units is to be decided by Zonal Railways within the fixed tariff approved by Railway Board.

(iii) For Rajdhani/Shatabdi/Duronto trains and such other trains in which catering charges are inbuilt in the passenger fare, the menu is to be decided by IRCTC in consultation with Railway Board to make it commensurate with the tariff, to be fixed by Railway Board.

(iv) Menu & Tariff of a-la-carte items served through static catering units managed by Zonal Railways as well as IRCTC, to be fixed by Zonal Railways in consultation with IRCTC.

(v) The Menu & Tariff of a-la-carte meals on mobile units handed over to IRCTC is to be decided by IRCTC. However, in cases where the contracts for mobile units are being re-assigned to IRCTC, the same terms and conditions including menu and tariff are applicable till the reassigned contracts cease to exist.

(vi) Menu and tariffs for Food Plaza, Food Courts and Fast Food units to be decided and fixed by IRCTC.

(vii) Adequate emphasis is to be laid on availability of regional cuisine all over Indian Railway.

(c): No, Madam. As per the Catering Policy 2010, the private caterers had to make kitchens at stations or locations nearby, to ensure hot, fresh and hygienic food is served to the passengers in trains. The food had to be prepared in the kitchen and supplied to the pantry car for storage and warming of food through available infrastructure in pantry car/mini pantries like hotcase, boiler, hotplates etc.

In the new Catering Policy 2017 further modifications have been made to upgrade the catering services and bring about all round improvement ensuring affordability and quality of catering service. The salient features of the policy are as under :-

New Catering Policy has been issued on 27th February 2017 with the objective to provide quality food to rail passengers by unbundling of catering services on trains. IRCTC has been mandated to carry out the unbundling by creating a distinction primarily between food preparation and food distribution. In order to upgrade quality of food preparation IRCTC to set up new kitchens and upgrade existing ones. The salient features of the new Catering Policy 2017 are as under :-

(i) IRCTC to manage catering service on all mobile units. Pantry car contracts awarded by zonal railway to be reassigned to IRCTC.

(ii) Meals for all mobile units to be picked up from the nominated kitchens owned, operated and managed by IRCTC.

(iii) IRCTC not to outrightly outsource or issue licenses for provision of catering services to private licensees. IRCTC to retain the ownership and be fully accountable for all the issues pertaining to setting up and operation of the Base Kitchens and quality of food.
(iv) IRCTC to engage service providers from hospitality industry for service of food in trains.
(v) All four Base Kitchens under departmental operation of Zonal Railways (Nagpur, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CSTM) , Mumbai Central (BCT) and Balharshah) and all kitchen units i.e. Refreshment Rooms at A1 and A category stations, Jan Ahaar, Cell Kitchens are to be handed over to IRCTC on 'as is where is basis'. IRCTC to set up its own Kitchens at additional stations, if required.
(vi) Kitchen structures/land/space to be handed over by zonal Railways to IRCTC, for a period of 10 years extendable for another period of 5 years, on a token license fee.
(vii) IRCTC to be responsible for management of Food Plaza, Food Courts, Fast food units within the ambit of this policy.
(viii) The setting up/ development / refurbishment of new or existing Base Kitchens/Kitchen units to be undertaken by IRCTC. These kitchens are to be owned, operated and managed by IRCTC.
(ix) IRCTC to develop different types of kitchens keeping in view supply of food and usage assessed.
(x) IRCTC to develop the Business model for the kitchens so that they can expand and enhance the service. IRCTC to prepare a detailed concession agreement for setting up/development of the kitchens.
(xi) IRCTC to involve/empanel Self Help groups for providing catering related services.
(xii) In view of change in role of IRCTC in terms of management of catering service, the existing MoU between Ministry of Railways and IRCTC is to be redefined.
(xiii) Zonal railway to manage static unit (catering stall /milk stalls/ trolleys etc.) except base kitchens and kitchen units to be handed over to IRCTC .
(xiv) For the purpose of allotment, a Refreshment Room (at B and below category stations) or a stall or a trolley to be deemed as one unit. As such, a single unit is to be awarded through a single license.
(xv) Provision of perpetual renewal has been done away with. Now it has been envisaged that tenure of all static units (except kitchen units and Food Plaza) shall be 5 years only. Tenure of Food Plaza shall be for a period of 9 years.
(xvi) Allotments of General Minor Units at all category stations to be done through open, competitive, two-packet tendering system from the eligible bidders by divisions.
(xvii) For the first time, it has been envisaged that allotment of Special Minor units (reserved category) at all category stations will be done by divisions through open tendering system within the similar reserved category. The technical eligibility criteria has been simplified.
(xviii) 33 % sub quota for women in allotment of each category of minor catering units at all category of station to be provided.

(d): The corrective measures taken/being taken to ensure hot and hygienic food is available to the passengers in trains and at stations, are as under:-
I. Penal Action arising out of irregularities, complaints and inspections:-
(i) Stringent action is taken by Railways and IRCTC against erring contractors. One contract has been terminated, one is under notice for termination while 16 contractors have been blacklisted for breach of terms of contracts in last one year.
(ii) A fine of ? 1.8 crores (approximately) has been collected in 2108 cases in the last one year.
II. Catering Complaint Monitoring & Redressal
(i) Operation of Centralized Catering Service Monitoring Cell (CSMC) (toll free number 1800-111-321) for prompt redressal of passenger grievances relating to the catering and real time assistance to travelling public. This Cell gives real time assistance to 250-300 passengers per day.
(ii) Inspections at various levels are conducted in trains & stations wherein feedback from passengers through surveys for enhanced satisfaction of the passengers is taken.
(iii) A Twitter handle with the address @IRCATERING has also been made operational to cater to the complaints/suggestions with regard to catering services.
(iv) Operation of All India Helpline (No.138) for rail-users to lodge complaints/ suggestions regarding food and catering services.
III. Other significant initiatives
(i) E-catering implemented at 357 A1 and A category stations for widening the range of options available to passengers for ordering fresh and hot food of their choice. Further proliferation at other major stations is being ensured.
(ii) Empanelment of Self Help Groups (SHGs) to provide healthy, wholesome regional cuisine at an affordable cost to the travelling public through e-catering has initiated and 9 SHGs have been empanelled at 10 stations.
(iii) Introduction of 'Ready to Eat' (RTE) precooked food on trains has been mandated by Ministry of Railways through IRCTC to ensure supply of hot meals.
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